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The Natural Knowledge of God as Revealed in Slovak Mythology

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THE NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS REVEALED IN SLOVAK MYTHOLOGY

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Introduction

The natural knowledge of God has always been a subject of great interest for the writer of this thesis. Especially did this interest become pronounced when after engaging in many discussions with learned acquaintances, it became evident that philosophical proofs for the existence of God presented in a logical manner were the only arguments worthy of their consideration. It was with these objectives in mind that the writer approached his chosen topic: 1) to be prepared and qualified to convince genuine seekers after God; 2) to strengthen the faith of believers; 3) to enrich his own knowledge about the nature of God and also Slovak mythology.

Man can know nothing about God, not even of His existence, except through the manifestations which God makes of Himself, through His self-revelation in the realm of nature, or in the realm of grace, that is to say, either through God's work of creation and providence or through His holy book, the Bible.[1] In natural revelation the existence of God addresses itself

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1. John T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 143.

not to the reason exclusively, but also to the conscience and to the affections. For as in the case of a visible object there must be an open eye to see it, and as in regard to audible sounds there must be an ear to hear, so, if one would apprehend the self-revelation of God, there must be in the soul an exercise of the power of discernment.[2] A similar thought, that the power of apprehending God is conditioned by the character of man's nature as a whole, was clearly seen and beautifully expressed by the ancient Christian apologist Theophilus.

> If thou sayest, show me thy God, I answer, show me first thy man, and I will show thee my God. Show me first whether the eyes of thy soul see, and the ears of thy heart hear. For as the eyes of the body perceive earthly things, light and darkness, white and black, beauty and deformity, et cetera, so the ears of the heart and the eyes of the soul can perceive divine things. God is seen by those who can see Him, when they open the eyes of their soul. All men have eyes, but the eyes of some are blinded that they cannot see the light of the sun. But the sun does not cease to shine because they are blind. They must ascribe it to their blindness that they cannot see. This is thy case, O man! The eyes of thy soul are darkened by sin, even by thy sinful actions. Like a bright mirror, man must have a pure soul. If there be any rust on the mirror, man cannot see the reflection of his countenance in it; likewise if there be any sin in man, he cannot see God.[3]

The proofs of the being of God are many self-revelations which God makes in the world and present themselves to the senses or fall under the eye of consciousness. They elicit,

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2. George P. Fisher, Manual of Natural Theology, p. 9.
3. Theophilus, Ad Autolycum, i. c. 2, quoted in Robert Flint, Theism, p. 353.

enlighten, and strengthen the spontaneous belief which is native to the human spirit. These so-called proofs or arguments are the recognition of God from different points of view. They bring Him before us in various aspects of His being and character, of His nature, attributes and operations.[4]

The first portion of this thesis dealing with the natural knowledge of God will be followed by and linked together with a study of Slovak mythology, namely, to determine in what respects this natural knowledge of God is revealed in Slovak mythology.

There is a definite want of authentic information concerning the religious beliefs and practices of the Slavs, since there is not a single pagan source for pagan Slavic belief in existence.[5] Records of ancient Slavic life which have come to us from the pen of native chroniclers imbued with Christian civilization are scanty and fragmentary. Writers of other nationalities, chiefly Christian missionaries working among the Slavs from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, have left much more thorough accounts of the religions of the Slavic peoples; yet being unfamiliar with the Slavic dialects and not well enough acquainted with the lives and customs of the Slavs, their documents are either very confused or betray

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4. Fisher, loc. cit.
5. Jaroslav Vlcek, Dejiny literatury slovenskej, p. 7, quoted in George Dolak, The Religious Beliefs and Practices of The Ancient Slavs, p. 1.

a one-sided point of view.[6] Leger lists the following as the only monuments of Slavic myth and ritual: 1) fragments of a temple in Arkona; 2) an idol (under suspicion) in Galicia; 3) some sculptures preserved in Danzig, which are probably neither Slavic nor mythological.[7] As sources for Slavic mythology, the same author lists: 1) primitive chronicles of pagan Slavs; 2) Latin chronicles of Germans or Danes; 3) Byzantine texts; 4) Arabian texts; 5) actual folk-lore; 6) theological writings of the Middle Ages; 7) language.[8]

It is well to note that old traditions and folk-lore, which still lives among the people, supplement the meager mythological accounts of the ancient Slavs. These legends are rich and contain ample survivals of the past, since the common folk adhered to their pagan beliefs and superstitions even after their conversion to Christianity.[9] These ancient national tales and traditions, preserved to this very day, are of primary importance and will form the basis of our description of Slovak mythology in this thesis.

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6. Jan Machal, The Mythology of All Races, vol. III, Slavic, Louis H. Gray, ed., p. 221.
7. Louis Leger, La mythologie slave, p. 2, quoted in Dolak, op. cit., p. 2.
8. Leger, op. cit., pp. 3-4, quoted in Dolak, op. cit., p. 5.
9. Machal, op. cit., p. 222.

I. Exegetical Study

Holy Scripture clearly teaches that there is a natural knowledge of God, by which man knows that there is a personal, eternal and omnipotent Divine Being, who has created this world, still preserves it and rules all things. The chief Scripture passage upon which this doctrine is based is recorded in St. Paul's epistle to the Romans: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."[10]

In order to obtain a clear picture and to understand the setting of the apostle's words, it is necessary to revert to the preceding verses of the first chapter of Romans and trace St. Paul's logical progression of thought. The apostle stated that the only righteousness which avails before God is the righteousness obtained by faith. He now proceeds to prove that this is the case. This proof required that he should, in the first place, demonstrate that the righteousness which is of the law, or of works, was insufficient for the justification of a sinner. He does this by referring first to the Gentiles in chapter 1, 18-32; and then to the Jews in the

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10. Romans 1: 19,20.

immediately following chapters 2 and 3, 1-20. The residue of the first chapter, with which we are concerned, is designed to prove that the Gentiles are justly exposed to condemnation. The apostle argues in this way: God is just; His displeasure against sin (which is its punishment) is clearly revealed. This is the foundation of his whole argument. If this be granted, it follows that all who are chargeable with either impiety or immorality are exposed to the wrath of God, and cannot claim His favor on the basis of their own character and conduct. St. Paul in this way proves that the Gentiles are justly chargeable with both impiety and immorality. They have ever enjoyed such a revelation of God as to render them inexcusable.[11] All that may be known of God, He has revealed in their hearts and consciences. For since the world has been created, His power to which there is no beginning and His attributes, though they cannot be seen, are traced upon the fabric of the visible creation. This revelation is so plain that it is impossible to escape the responsibility of ignoring it. The guilt of men lay not in their ignorance; for they had a knowledge of God. But in spite of that knowledge, they did not pay the homage due to Him as God and deserted Him.[12]

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11. Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to The Romans, p. 51.
12. William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, The International Critical Commentary, The Epistle to The Romans, p. 39.

In the 17th verse of chapter one St. Paul brings out that righteousness is by faith. "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."[13] The apostle's object is to now prove the doctrine contained in this verse. To do this it was necessary to show that men in themselves are exposed to condemnation, or are devoid of any righteousness which can meet the demands of God. St. Paul's argument is, God is just; He is determined to punish sin. As all men are sinners, all are exposed to punishment. This determination of God to punish sin is brought to light and made known, not necessarily by any special revelation. This purpose of God is made manifest in various ways: by the actual punishment of sin, by the inherent tendency of moral evil to produce misery, and by the voice of conscience. God's revelation is clear and certain. Men know the righteous judgment of God; they know that those who commit sin by living in unrighteousness, impiety and active irreligiousness and by continually hindering, thwarting and suppressing the truth, which makes men guilty before God and leads to unrighteousness, are worthy of death. This ultimate truth existing in every man's consciousness, is properly assumed and made the basis of the apostle's argument.[14]

That this opposition to God is wicked and inexcusable

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13. Romans 1: 17.
14. Hodge, op. cit., p. 52.

on the plea of ignorance is proved in verse 19 and the following verses. God will carry out His punitive justice and punish the impiety and unrighteousness of men, because He has made Himself known to them. God has never left Himself without a witness among His rational creatures. He has revealed His own nature in His works and the rule of duty in the human heart; thus God has given adequate light to render the impiety and immorality of men inexcusable. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them."[15] τὸ γνωστὸν in Scripture generally means as a rule "known." It may also be used in the stricter sense, as in the English King James Version, meaning "what may be known."[16] The apostle does not mean to say that everything that may be known about God was revealed to the heathen, but simply that they had such a knowledge of God which made their impiety inexcusable. The knowledge of God does not mean merely a knowledge that there is a God, but, as appears from what follows, a knowledge of His nature and attributes, His eternal power and Divinity and His justice.[17] φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς "is manifest in them." "In them" here means in their minds, since any revelation must pass through human consciousness.[18] St. Paul is not speaking of a mere external revelation, but of the evidence of the being of God which

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15. Romans 1: 19.
16. Sanday and Headlam, op. cit., p. 42.
17. Hodge, op. cit., p. 54.
18. Sanday and Headlam, loc. cit.

every man has in the constitution of his own nature through which he is able to apprehend the manifestations of God in His works. ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐφανέρωσεν "for God has revealed it to them." This refers to the knowledge of Himself, which is the manifestation of God in His works, and in the constitution of our nature. We find a direct parallel in the book of Acts: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."[19] Another parallel passage recorded in the same book reads:

> And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply thay might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us; For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.[20]

The existence and nature of God have ever been so clearly revealed that His rational creatures are bound to acknowledge and worship Him alone as the true and only God.

In the next verse, verse 20, St. Paul confirms and expands on the preceding thought, inasmuch as it proves that God does manifest Himself to men, showing how this manifestation is made and drawing the inference that men are inexcusable for their impiety in virtue of this revelation. The argument is, God has manifested the knowledge of Himself to man, for

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19. Acts 14: 17.
20. Acts 17: 26-28.

the invisible things of him, that is, His eternal power and Godhead, are since the creation clearly seen, being understood by His works; therefore they are without excuse.[21]

τὰ ἀόρατα are the unseen qualities of God. Theophylact understands them to mean His goodness, wisdom, power and majesty. The greater majority of commentators prefer this interpretation, rather than understanding the invisible things of God to mean creation, providence and divine judgments. It is well suited to the context, because the works of God are expressed afterwards by ποιήματα and because the invisible things are those which are manifested by His works and are explained by the terms "power and Godhead."[22] This divine revelation has been made ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου "from the creation of the world." The preposition ἀπὸ is temporal, "from the time of." κτίσις here is the act of creation and not the thing created; and the means by which this revelation is made, is expressed immediately by the words τοῖς ποιήμασι, which would be redundant if the divine revelation were to be made by the creation. In this connection the ποιήματα are the things made by God rather than the things done by Him. St. Paul here uses an oxymoron, "seeing invisible things." These unseen things are clearly seen because they are perceived by the mind and are understood by means of the

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21. Hodge, loc. cit.
22. Ibid., p. 55.

things made.[23] εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους "so that they are inexcusable." This does not denote direct and primary purpose, but indirect or secondary purpose. God did not design that man should sin; but He did design that if they sinned, they should be without excuse: on His part all was done to give man a sufficient knowledge of His nature and perfections.[24] This revelation of God has been made, therefore men have no apology for their ignorance and neglect of God. Though the revelation of God in His works is sufficient to make men inexcusable, it does not follow that it is sufficient to lead sin-blinded men to a saving knowledge of God.[25]

The light of nature is sufficient as a manifestation of God, but it is not a sufficient guide to salvation. Man by nature knows that there is a just and a holy God. The apostle has clearly shown that the knowledge of God has been revealed to men and does not hesitate to say that the heathen knew God. This does not mean that they had only the opportunity of knowing Him, but that in the constitution of their own nature and in the works of creation, they actually possessed an intelligible revelation of the Divine existence and perfections. This revelation was generally so neglected, that men did not know what it taught. Still they had the knowledge in the same sense that those who have the Bible are said to have

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23. Ibid.
24. Sanday and Headlam, op. cit., p. 44.
25. Hodge, op. cit., p. 56.

knowledge of the will of God however much they may neglect or disregard it. In both cases there is a knowledge presented and a revelation made, and in both cases ignorance is without excuse.[26]

J. A. Quenstedt, a dogmatician of the late 17th century, in commenting on the natural knowledge of God as insufficient for salvation, writes: "The natural knowledge of God is not adequate to secure everlasting life, nor has any mortal ever been redeemed, nor can anyone ever be redeemed, by it alone."[27] The natural knowledge of God does not reveal that the eternal demands of God's perfect justice have been satisfied by the vicarious satisfaction of Christ.[28] "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."[29]

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26. Ibid.
27. Quenstedt, quoted in Mueller, op. cit., p. 146.
28. Mueller, loc. cit.
29. 1 Corinthians 1: 21.

II. Proofs for the Existence of God

Proofs for the existence of God are as windows through which the recognition of God is viewed from different aspects. These proofs bring the being and character of God before our eyes. In the COSMOLOGICAL PROOF, which rests on the principle of causation, we discern God as the self-existent Cause of all things that are.[30]

Scripture passages like "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God."[31]

> And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.[32]

have been referred to as anticipations of the cosmological argument. Whenever nature is spoken of in Scripture, it is referred to as the work of an uncreated being, of a free and sovereign mind.[33]

Aristotle gave a formal expression to this argument by

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30. Fisher, op. cit., p. 9.
31. Psalm 90: 1,2.
32. Hebrews 1: 10-12.
33. Robert Flint, Theism, p. 364.

inferring from the motion of the universe the existence of a first unmoved mover. Well-known is St. Augustine's "Interrogavi terram, et dixit: non sum. Interrogavi mare et abyssos - et responderunt: non sumus deus tuus, quaere super nos. Interrogavi coelum, solem, lunam, stellas: neque omnibus iis - dicite mihi de illo aliquid. Et exclamaverunt voce magna: ipse fecit nos. Interrogavi mundi molem de Deo meo et respondit mihi: non ego sum, sed ipse me fecit."[34]

Thomas Aquinas argued on the principle of causality in three ways. 1) From motion to a first moving principle, which is not moved by another principle.

> It is impossible that a thing should be both mover and be moved, i.e., that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is moved must be moved by another. If that by which it is moved be itself moved, then this also must needs be moved by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover, seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are moved by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is moved by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, moved by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.[35]

2) From effects to a first efficient cause.

> In the world of sensible things we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is

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34. St. Augustine, Confessions, X, 6, quoted in Flint, loc. cit.
35. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Part I, Question 2, Article 3, in Introduction To St. Thomas Aquinas, Anton C. Pegis, p. 25.

> impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate the cause of the ultimate cause. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.[36]

3) From the possible and contingent to what is in itself necessary.

> We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to be corrupted, and consequently, it is possible for them to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which can not-be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything can not-be, then at one time there was nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist begins to exist only through something existing. It is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but admit the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.[37]

It is a self-evident truth that nothing can occur or come into being without a cause. It is difficult for a person to conceive of an uncaused occurrence, for we know that an uncaused occurrence is impossible. Suppose nothing existed

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36. Ibid., pp. 25-26.
37. Ibid., p. 26.

and the universe were an infinite void. We know as well as we know anything that nothing could ever come into existence. It is just as difficult to believe that something may begin to exist which has no connection whatever with anything before it. To illustrate this point, let us take a given phenomenon which we shall call "b". This follows upon another phenomenon which we call "a", yet if we suppose that there is no connection between "a" and "b" - that "a" doesn't exert the slightest influence in giving existence to "b" - then it is clear that we may as well think of "a" as not existing at all. For "a" does not help us a bit in accounting for the occurrence of "b".[38] Something must have existed from eternity. This inference cannot be avoided because of the fact that something exists now. We see the world and ourselves as a part of this world. Phenomena appear and disappear. Motion is everywhere. We cannot escape the necessity of thought to recognize the existence of an eternal something, which we may designate the First Cause.[39]

This Cause is uncaused. It is a self-existent being, not depending upon anything beyond itself, having its ground of existence in itself. The phenomena of the universe and their harmony are accounted for by this infinite First Cause in the cosmological argument. In tracing effects back to their causes, the causes are found to be effects also. The

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38. Fisher, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
39. Ibid., p. 12.

path is endless, leading to nowhere. There is no goal, nor is a satisfactory conclusion reached. The argument of a First Cause, which is a "free cause, a self-moving, self-determining agency,"[40] does not require us to retrace causation ad infinitum and puts an end to "the regressive series of links in causation."[41] In our quest for the cause of all things that begin to be, we are lead to the acknowledgement of a personal Deity. "The world exists, but it is an effect. It must therefore have a cause other than itself, and the name for this ultimate extra-mundane cause is God."[42] We must fall back on the recognition of the Absolute Being, God, for only in Him do we find the origin and justification of the principle of causation.[43]

The TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT or the proof from DESIGN starts with the evidences of design and beauty which are observed in the universe, and infers a Designer of sufficient intelligence and wisdom to account for them. The personality of God is proved in the argument of design. For God is known to be intelligent and free by the evident traces of purpose in the constitution of the world.[44] An intelligible world is readily understood to be "thought realized" and this means

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40. Ibid., p. 14.
41. Francis J. Hall, Theological Outlines, p. 45.
42. John Laird, Theism and Cosmology, p. 94.
43. George P. Fisher, The Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief, p. 27.
44. Fisher, op. cit., p. 47.

there has been forethought, and a Fore-thinker.[45] Where order meets our eye, the natural and immediate inference is that there is the work of intelligence. Order meets us everywhere as it covers and pervades the universe. It is obvious to the ordinary naked eye, and spreads far beyond the range of bare vision when assisted by all the instruments and appliances which science and art have been able to devise. It goes back through all the ages of human history, and all the ages of geological and astronomical time.[46] It is so clear and direct that it has presented itself to the mind from very ancient times. It is implied in such passages of Scripture as

> For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength. He sealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work. Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places. Out of the south cometh the whirlwind; and cold out of the north. By the breath of God frost is given; and the breadth of the waters is straitened. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud: And it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth.[47]

> The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle

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45. Hall, op. cit., p. 47.
46. Flint, op. cit., pp. 132-133.
47. Job 37: 6-12.

> for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.[48]
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> Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.[49]

Pythagoras laid great stress on the order of the world; and it was chiefly on that order that Anaxagoras rested his belief in a Supreme Intelligence. Socrates developed the argument from the adaptation of the parts of the body to one another, and to the external world with a skill which has never been equalled. His conversation with Aristodemus, as recorded in the "Memorabilia" of Xenophon, is of wonderful interest and beauty. Few will follow it even now without feeling compelled to join Aristodemus in acknowledging that "man must be the masterpiece of some great Artificer, carrying along with it infinite marks of the love and favour of Him who thus formed it."[50] Aristotle expressly maintains that "the appearance of ends and means is a proof of design," and conceives of God as the ultimate Final Cause. This teleological proof is found very frequently in the writings of the fathers and scholastics. "When we see a vessel," says Theophilus, "spreading her canvas, and majestically riding on

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48. Psalm 19: 1-6.
49. Isaiah 40: 26.
50. Flint, op. cit., p. 387.

the billows of the stormy sea, we conclude that she has a pilot on board; thus, from the regular course of the planets, the rich variety of creatures, we infer the existence of the Creator."[51] Gregory of Nazianzum compares the universe to a lyre, and Minucius Felix compares it to a house in illustrating the same argument. Ambrose, Athanasius, Augustine, Basil the Greek and Chrysostom employ it; so do Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas.[52]

> The existence of God can be proved from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that they achieve their end, not fortuitously, but designedly. Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is directed by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.[53]

The facts with which the teleological argument starts are: 1) the general prevalence of order and adjustment, as of means to ends; 2) the unity of nature, as seen in the coincidence and cooperation of physical causes to the production of single results, and in the general harmony of the ends to which all parts of nature are adapted.[54]

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51. Theophilus, Ad Autolycum, 5, quoted in Flint, op. cit., p. 388
52. Flint, op. cit., p. 388.
53. Aquinas, op. cit., p. 27.
54. Hall, loc. cit.

The argument of design, as John Stuart Mill has pointed out, is a genuine instance of inductive reasoning.

> The design argument is not drawn from mere resemblance in nature to the work of human intelligence, but from the special character of this resemblance. The circumstances in which it is alleged that the world resembles the works of man are not circumstances taken at random, but are particular instances of a circumstance which experience shows to have real connection with an intelligent origin, the fact of conspiring to an end. The argument, therefore, is not one of mere analogy. As mere analogy it has its weight, but it is more than analogy. It surpasses analogy exactly as induction surpasses. It is an inductive argument.[55]

Being an inductive argument, the conclusion rests on the same basis as most of the truths of natural science. How do we know that the apple on the tree in the orchard, when the breeze shall sever it from the bough, will fall to the ground? It is an inference from what is known to have occurred in similar instances to countless material objects. What is the law of gravitation? It is an induction from observed instances.[56]

The proof from design is often styled the argument from final causes. In this expression the term "final" refers to the end or purpose for which anything is made, as distinguished from the efficient causes concerned in its origination. The end is the purpose in view, and is so designated because its manifestation is last in the order of

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55. John S. Mill, "Three Essays on Religion," Theism, pp. 169-170, quoted in Fisher, Manual of Natural Theology, p. 20.
56. Fisher, loc. cit.

time. For example, a man purposes to build a house. He gathers cement, lumber, nails, bricks, tools and all the necessary materials. He lays the foundation, puts up the framework, and in short, does everything necessary to carry out his intention. The final cause is seen in the completed house for the habitation of his family. The final cause of a watch is to indicate time. The efficient causes are the forces and agencies concerned in the making of the watch and in the regular movement of its parts.[57] Inductive reasoning assumes that there is an orderly plan in the world, a uniformity of nature. From countless known instances of mortality, we conclude that all men are mortal. The uniformity of nature involves the truth that nature proceeds according to a plan and is a definite system. The postulate of science is the rationality of nature. Science, as Prof. Huxley declares, is "the discovery of the rational order that pervades the universe." Without this presupposition of a rational order in the world, scientific investigation would be a chase after foolish fancy. What is astronomy but a transcript of thoughts which are realized in the structure of the heavens?[58] Every creature and phenomena are letters in the book of nature written with the finger of God, which science endeavors to decipher and read.[59] Because nature is a rational system,

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57. Ibid., p. 21.
58. Ibid., pp. 23-24.
59. E. Eckhardt, Homiletisches Reallexikon, p. 758.

it is adapted to our faculties of knowing. This correspondence proves that the author of the mind is the author of "the mind in nature."[60] What being, says Cicero, that is "destitute of intellect and reason could have produced these things which not only had need of reason to cause them to be, but which are such as can be understood only by the highest exertions of reason?"[61]

It is in living organisms that the marks of forethought are brought out most forcefully. Every part in an organism is both means and end. The best example of the nature of an organism is our own human body. Its members are "members one of another." The skin covering the body is indispensable to its life and health and is always contributing to this end. Yet the body as a whole is perpetually at work weaving this covering for itself. When a person burns himself, a part of the skin is destroyed; then the entire system at once gets to work to repair the loss. The impression made by the human organism as a whole impresses itself more deeply when we consider its various organs. Study the structure of the eye or of the ear as they are related to their respective functions. Consider the process of digestion, or respiration, or circulation of the blood. When the student does not try to speculate and deny the natural impression which these wonderful arrangements make upon the mind, he cannot but come to

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60. Fisher, op. cit., p. 25.
61. Cicero, De Natura Deorum, II, 44, quoted in Fisher, loc. cit.

the conviction that they were planned beforehand and could not have originated elsewhere than in a Mind.[62]

The design argument has always drawn some of its data from astronomy. The order and beauty of the heavenly bodies, the alternation of day and night, the succession of the seasons, and the dependence of creatures upon these changes, are referred to as indications of God's character and agency in many passages of Scripture.[63] "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?"[64] "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge."[65]

> He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.[66]

Astronomy, in the relations and motions of the heavenly bodies, has irresistibly compelled the greatest masters in

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62. Fisher, op. cit., pp. 46-47.
63. Flint, op. cit., pp. 369-370
64. Psalm 8: 3,4.
65. Psalm 19: 1,2.
66. Psalm 104: 19-24.

the branch of astronomy to detect with the eye and mind the power and wisdom of God in the starry system. Kepler could not escape the conviction that in discovering astronomic laws he was rethinking the thoughts of God.[67] In concluding his work on the "Harmony of Worlds" he uses these devout words:

> I thank thee, my Creator and Lord, that Thou hast given me this joy in Thy creation, this delight in the works of Thy hands. I have shown the excellency of Thy work unto men, so far as my finite mind was able to comprehend Thine infinity. If I have said aught unworthy of Thee, or aught in which I may have sought my own glory, graciously forgive it.[68]

There are several departments of science adapted as much or even more than astronomy to furnish proofs for the wisdom of God. But there is no other science which offers us such evidence of His power, or so helps us to realize His omnipresence, our own nothingness before Him, and the littleness of our earth in the system of His creation.[69]

The laws of modern chemistry testify to the presence and agency of a Supreme Intelligence. Water alone in its various adaptations, as its power of being changed into vapor, condensed into rain, converted into steam, its relations to heat and cold, its agency as an almost universal solvent, its mechanical capacities by which it can corrode

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67. Fisher, op. cit., p. 50.
68. Johann Kepler, Harmony of Worlds, quoted in Flint, op. cit., p. 371.
69. Flint, op. cit., p. 373.

rocks, forms a striking and an instructive chapter in bearing testimony to an all-wise God.[70]

The provisions incorporated in nature, which are related to man as a social being, lead the mind strongly to recognizing a divine wisdom as the only reasonable explanation of their origin. In nature foundations are laid for the marriage relation and thus for the origination of the family. The impression of wonderment which is made when a child is born, with its physical structure, its instincts and aptitudes, is nothing short of that produced by a miracle. Through the institution of a family a foundation is laid for a larger community, the state. The family is patterned to be a school for discipline in obedience, loyalty, and self-sacrifice for the sake of others. It is a school to prepare the members of the household for citizenship. Through the family and the state feelings are awakened which appear designed to serve as an education for a society of wider compass, even for a kingdom of which God is the Father. Considering these relationships of man, we see in them, regarded by themselves, the clearest evidences of design, bringing God before us.[71]

A well-known counter-argument which deserves mention is the alternative of design - chance, as propounded by the Roman poet Lucretius, a disciple of the Epicurean school. He held that the world is the result of a "fortuitous

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70. Josiah P. Cooke, Religion and Chemistry, pp. 119-162.
71. Fisher, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

concourse of atoms."[72] His theory is tersely expressed in these words:

> Nam certe neque consilio primordia rerum
> ordine se suo quaeque sagaci mente locarunt
> nec quos quaeque darent motus pepigere profecto,
> sed quia multa modis multis mutata per omne
> ex infinito vexantur percita plagis,
> omne gentus motus et coetus experiundo
> tandem deveniunt in talis disposituras,
> qualibus haec rerum consistit summa creata.[73]

In upholding this theory one might just as reasonably believe that a haphazard collection of metallic type could by mere accident fall on this paper in such a way as to print this thesis. Eckhardt comments: "Just as much as the verses of Cicero came into existence by mere accident from a sack-full of letters, so much did the world come into existence by itself."[74] Cicero, in remarking on this theory of the Epicureans, after speaking of the vast orderly system of things seen above us and around us exclaims:

> Is it possible for any man to behold these things, and yet imagine that certain solid and individual bodies move by their natural force and gravitation and that a world so beautifully adorned was made by their fortuitous concourse? He who believes this may as well believe that if a great quantity of the one-and-twenty letters (the number of the letters in the Roman alphabet) composed of gold or of any other matter, were thrown upon the ground they would fall into such order as legibly to form the Annals of Ennius? If a concourse of atoms can make a world, why not a porch, a temple, a house,

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72. Hall, op. cit., p. 48.
73. T. Lucreti Cari, De Rerum Natura, Book Six, lines 1021-1028, p. 28.
74. Eckhardt, loc. cit.

> a city, which are works of less labor and difficulty?[75]

Although the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant rejected the teleological argument, he speaks of it in these terms:

> This proof deserves to be mentioned at all times with respect. It is the oldest, the clearest, and the most suited to the ordinary understanding. It animates the study of nature, because it owes its existence to thought, and ever receives from it fresh force. It brings out reality and purpose where our observation would not of itself have discovered them, and extends our knowledge of nature by exhibiting indications of a special unity whose principle is beyond nature. This knowledge, moreover, directs us to its cause - namely, the inducing idea, and increases our faith in a supreme originator to an almost irresistible conviction.[76]

Everything in nature points toward a harmonious unity, toward a clearly indicated Architect. There must be a God, who in a knowing and supremely intelligent manner brought into being all the things having a purpose. He had the goal and end in mind from the very beginning; He must be omniscient and omnipotent.

We now continue with the MORAL PROOF for the existence of God, which proceeds from the sense of accountability and the religious instinct common to all men. This argument infers that there must be a righteous and personal Ruler and Judge to whom we are accountable and whom we ought to worship. Religion in some form or other, no matter how debased, is universal; and this bears witness to a sense of

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75. Cicero, op. cit., II, 37, quoted in Fisher, op. cit., p. 42.
76. Kant, quoted in Flint, op. cit., p. 389.

dependence upon God equally universal.[77] St. Augustine has expressed this thought beautifully in the words: "Quia fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te."[78] The moral argument may also be termed the argument from conscience. It is the obvious inference from the obvious facts of our moral consciousness. The argument is simple and demands of us no subtle analysis of conscience. It is not dependent on the truth of some particular theory as to the origin of conscience. It is based directly on what cannot be denied or disputed, the existence of conscience, the existence of certain moral judgments and feelings common to the experience of men. Conscience exists. It exists as a consciousness of moral law and someone standing behind that law; it exists as a rule of duty and a sense of responsibility. When the conscience pronounces an action right, it does so because it recognizes the action to be conformed to law; when it calls an action wrong, it does so because it recognizes the action to fall short of or transgress the law. Conscience acts as the judge or overseer of all that we do. In this capacity it accuses or excuses, condemns or approves, punishes or rewards us with a voice of authority, which we may disregard, but the genuiness and reality of which we cannot dispute.[79] The historical proof of this truth is so

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77. Hall, op. cit., pp. 50-51.
78. Sancti Augustini, Confessiones, I, 1, p. 1.
79. Flint, op. cit., p. 217.

plentiful, that it would require a volume to do it justice; all literatures might be made to yield contributions to it. There is no heathen so blind, no evildoer so brutal, no atheist so impudent, no philosopher so clever that his conscience be altogether dead.[80]

Man possess freedom of the will, except in spiritual matters, having the ability of choosing what to do or not to do. This makes men accountable and responsible, for there can be no freedom without responsibility. Man's choice is based not upon will itself, but upon the result of the influence which his intellect exerts. In other words, man recognizes the choice before him, and knowing good and evil, he is responsible for the choice which he makes. While man is free, he is equally conscious of being subject to a law, not of his own making. It is a law written in the heart. In particular decisions as to what course of action to take, we may be confused and misled by ignorance and bias, but the feeling of obligation to do that which is felt to be right is imperative. This imperative character, the feeling that "I ought" that "I must" whether I like it or not, stamps upon the conscience its unique quality.[81] Kant did not deny the existence of a God. He referred to the above-mentioned imperative character of the law as the "categorical imperative," which is a feeling of duty, an outright demand inside of a

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80. Eckhardt, op. cit., p. 759.
81. Fisher, op. cit., p. 57.

person to which there is no escape. "Since moral obligation connotes God, whose existence reason cannot deny, we may feel morally, if not intellectually, certain of the being of God."[82]

Through the operations of conscience it is evident that we are subject to a righteous Lawgiver, who rewards and punishes. Right is the supreme, only authoritative impulse in the soul. He who planted it there and gave it its imperative character must Himself be righteous.[83] We are brought into contact with the moral attributes of Him in whom "we live and move and have our being." There is within us an undeniable and clear testimony to his holiness and righteousness.[84] In addition, as the moral nature of man is enlightened, we come to the clear perception which conscience impresses upon us that, God the Creator and Ruler is benevolent, as well as holy and righteous and the impersonation of love.[85] This same argument is put in a different form by Thomas Erskine, who writes:

> When I attentively consider what is going on in my conscience, the chief thing forced on my notice is, that I find myself face to face with a purpose - not my own, for I am often conscious of resisting it - but which dominates me and makes itself felt as ever present, as the very root and reason of my being...This consciousness of a purpose

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82. B. A. G. Fuller, A History of Philosophy, II, p. 246.
83. Fisher, The Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief, p. 55.
84. Fisher, Manual of Natural Theology, p. 62.
85. Ibid.

> concerning me that I should be a good man - right, true, unselfish - is the first firm footing I have in the region of religious thought, for I cannot dissociate the idea of a purpose from that of a Purposer, and I cannot but identify this Purposer with the Author of my being and the Being of all things; and, further, I cannot but regard his purpose toward me as the unmistakable indication of his own character.[86]

Another branch of the moral argument is evident in a moral government. The course of human affairs affords adequate proof of a righteous administration on the part of the Supreme Ruler. Rewards of happiness follow the train of virtue, suffering is the consequence of vice. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,"[87] is not merely a declaration of Scripture, but it is a fact of observation. It is an adage which is based on a wide range of experience. It is true that good and evil is not distributed in strict proportion to the deserts of the individual. This rule is not without exceptions. Calamities befall the righteous, prosperity is enjoyed by the wicked, these are phenomena which require special consideration. But no matter how the works and ways of Providence may strike us as falling short of the requirements of justice, or as varying from them, there is enough to convince the candid observer of the lives of individuals and of the history of nations that a righteous God reigns and orders the succession of events.[88]

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86. Thomas Erskine, quoted in Fisher, op. cit., p. 63.
87. Galatians 6: 7.
88. Fisher, op. cit., p. 64.

Under proofs for the existence of God, the HISTORICAL ARGUMENT shall also be briefly treated. It is a special form of the argument of design, as deduced from a consideration of the general march of events. There seems to be written on the pages of history that all things make for the fulfilment of a plan, in which the interests of wisdom and righteousness attain the uppermost position. This points to the existence of a supreme, wise, and righteous Governor of the physical and moral world.[89] History, containing a providential order and a moral order enclosed within it, discovers God. Events do not occur in a chaotic series. "A progress is discernible, an orderly succession of phenomena, the accomplishment of ends by the concurrence of agencies beyond the power of individuals to originate or combine."[90] There is a Power that makes for righteousness.

The evidences of physical and moral disorder in the world raise a serious problem, but do not destroy the force of the historical argument. For 1) the most that these evidences indicate is that the complete fulfilment of God's plan and design has not yet come to fruition. 2) Whatever may be the nature and origin of evil in the world, it does not defeat the continual moral progress of the world. 3) There are clear indications that God so overrules the forces of evil that He uses them as instruments in accomplishing His own

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89. Hall, op. cit., p. 48.
90. Fisher, Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief, p. 5.

good ends.[91]

Belief in the existence of God is instinctive and is practically as wide-spread as the race, although it is often found in perverted and grotesque forms and buried beneath superstitious ideas. The arguments for the existence of God do not originate such belief. They accentuate, articulate and justify the existence of God and offer various points of view, from which God can be considered. They show, not simply that God is; but by drawing our attention to certain inferences which can be gathered from his handiwork, these arguments help us to see what He is.[92] The force of the arguments for God's existence is cumulative, and sufficient to produce in any honest and unprejudiced seeker after the truth a moral certainty that He exists. Each particular argument or proof is logically incomplete, but each suggests the hypothesis of God's existence as the true explanation of the phenomena of the universe. When this hypothesis is once adopted, innumerable lines of evidence are seen to converge upon it and confirm it. While therefore the hypothesis is seen to be the "solution of a problem, rather than the conclusion of a demonstration, the fact that it is the true solution becomes as certain as any scientific conviction."[93] The cosmological argument points to One uncaused First Cause

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91. Flint, op. cit., pp. 413-422.
92. Hall, op. cit., p. 54.
93. Hall, Being and Attributes, pp. 212-213.

and Orderer of all. The idea of a cause carries with it the presence of will and of purpose. The First Cause must also be without beginning, i.e., eternal and infinite. This First Cause is behind all the secondary causes that are operative in nature. The teleological argument through evidences of design and purpose which are everywhere in nature pictures God to us as intelligent, wise and free. The moral argument argues from the existence of our moral constitution to the existence of a Supreme moral Being who is just and righteous in all His ways and will not behold iniquity.[94] The historical argument draws from the history of man the conclusion that there is a wise, divine Ruler who guides all the affairs of the world to an end which He has in view and to the ultimate good of His creatures.[95]

The natural knowledge of God is very dim, veiled, obscure, imperfect and does not go far. It is as though it were covered by a cloud. Man sees only the footprints of God. The fact that man knows there is a God, that He is mighty, wise, good, just, righteous, etc., is the least part of the true knowledge of God.[96] The natural knowledge of God fills man with a fear of God and is useful in inducing man to seek after God. Though it is innate, it can nevertheless be expanded and further confirmed by the contemplation of the

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94. Mueller, op. cit., p. 145.
95. Ibid.
96. Eckhardt, op. cit., p. 760.

works and ways of God in nature; it may on the other hand, also be corrupted and changed into error through the moral depravity existing in men.

The natural knowledge of God is also of great benefit and value to mankind, because it is the basis of the civil righteousness of natural man, and the initial point for the proclamation of the revelation of the Law of God by Christian missionaries among the heathen.[97] Luther rightly declares that, "had not God written the Law into man's heart, we would have to preach a long time before man's conscience would be smitten."[98] It is also of value in maintaining order and discipline among men. Natural religion is the groundwork of the state; indirectly the church also benefits by it, for where order and discipline exist, there is peace and the church can establish itself and flourish without any interference.[99]

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97. Mueller, loc. cit.
98. Luther, St. Louis III, 1053, quoted in Mueller, loc. cit.
99. Eckhardt, op. cit., p. 762.

PART II: SLOVAK MYTHOLOGY

III. The Supreme Slavic God

Belief in the existence of a god, a supreme being, is innate and also exhibited in the religious beliefs and practices of primitive peoples. The early pagan Slavs made idols for themselves, which they thought embodied their deities, and prayed to them.[100] Two records show how the pagan Slavs came to adopt the worship of one chief deity. The Greek historian Procopius of Caesarea writes as follows: "They believe that there is one single god who is the creator of the lightning and the sole lord of all things, and to him they sacrifice cattle and all sorts of animals."[101] A similar account concerning the Elbe Slavs is given by the chronicler Helmold:

> Among the multiform divine powers to whom they ascribe fields, forests, sorrows, and joys they do not deny that one god rules over the others in heaven and that he, pre-eminent in might, cares only for things celestial; whereas the rest, obeying the duties assigned them, have sprung from his blood and enjoy distinction in proportion to their nearness to that god of gods.[102]

This one god who was considered supreme over all the other gods in the Slavic pantheon, was referred to as "boh bohov"

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100. Jan Machal, in The Mythology of All Races, Louis H. Gray, ed., vol. III, Slavic, p. 277.
101. Procopius, De Bello Gothico, quoted in Machal, loc. cit.
102. Helmold, quoted in ibid.

(the god of gods).[103] The Slavs believed in good and evil gods who originally originated from this one heavenly god, who created and regulated the entire universe and to whom all other gods were subjugated as a family to its house-father.[104]

The name of this chief god of the Slavs has not come down to us, however, he is identified with various Slavic deities. In this respect, Osusky writes: "Above all deities stands Prabog, the soothsayer of soothsayers, who sits enthroned in the heaven beyond reach. He is called also Boh and Gospodi."[105] Morfill is of the opinion that this supreme Slavic deity was Svantovit. He interprets the above quotation from Procopius as having been made in view of the greatness of Svantovit's cult and consequently, Procopius thought Svantovit was the only Slavic God.[106] The Chronicle of Nestor places Perun on an equal level with the God of the Christians when it writes concerning a treaty which was concluded in 945 between the Slavs and the Greeks: "May the Christian Russians who violate this treaty be abandoned by the almighty God; may those who have not been baptized get

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103. J. Otto, "Slovanske bajeslovi" in Naucny slovnik, XXIII, p. 437, quoted in Dolak, op. cit., p. 6.
104. F. Kulhanek, Prehlad dejin a vzdelanosti vsetkych kulturnych narodov, p. 176.
105. S. S. Osusky, Dejiny nabozenstva, p. 38, quoted in Dolak, op. cit., p. 7.
106. W. R. Morfill, "Slavic Religion" in Religious Systems of The World, Sheowring-Thies, ed., p. 261.

no help from God or Perun."[107] This quotation suggests that Perun was considered the supreme Slavic deity by the Russians and worshiped among them as such. The name of Svarog, who, in old chronicles is often identified with Hephaistos, is also listed as the supreme Slavic deity.[108]

Svarog, Svantovit, and Perun are the three most important names advanced and deserve individual consideration.

The meaning of the name Svarog is not definite, but has been the subject of much theorizing. Most authorities explain "svar" as meaning heat, light, brilliance, and therefore interpret the term as the regenerating, bright, or holy sun.[109] Others connect the term with the firmament and are of the opinion that Svarog means the firmament, or the running, moving heaven, i.e., the cloudy heaven.[110] Very little, in fact almost nothing can be found about Svarog and his worship outside of these speculations over his name.

Svantovit was considered the highest god of the Polabian Slavs and also of the Czechoslovaks and identified with the supreme deity. Literature on the religion of these Slavs christianized in the 12th century is ample and offers more material about Svantovit. But as in the case of Svarog

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107. Leger, op. cit., p. 50, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 8.
108. Machal, loc. cit.
109. Kulhanek, loc. cit.
110. Machal, Nakres slovanskeho bajeslovi, pp. 32-33, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 9.

there is also much uncertainty attached to the meaning of Svantovit. "Svant" is most generally considered as meaning holy, but the second syllable "vit" is the stone in our etymological shoe. Svantovit is taken by some to mean holy and powerful victor; in this instance "vit" is associated with "vitazstvo" (victory).[111] Others take "vit" in the sense of light and translate Svantovit as holy light.[112] It is evident that Svantovit's name assigns him a position of primacy in the Slavic pantheon as the god of the gods, "boh bohov." Helmold writes about Svantovit standing far above the other deities, for "he is so much more effective in his oracular responses that out of regard for him they (Elbe Slavs) think of the others as demigods."[113] Prophecies were sought from him from far and near, and neighboring nations even sent gifts to his temple to gain his favour. Saxo Grammaticus, another authority on the Svantovit cult, describes the image of Svantovit in Arkona, which was the center of his-worship on the island of Ruegen,[114] as follows:

> In the temple stood a huge image, far overtopping all human stature, marvellous for its four heads and four necks, two facing the breast and two the back. Moreover, of those in front as well as of those behind, one looked leftwards and the other rightwards. The beards were figured as shaven

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111. Dobrowsky, quoted in Leger, op. cit., quoted in Dolak, op. cit., p. 10.
112. Kulhanek, loc. cit.
113. Leger, op. cit., p. 20, quoted in Dolak, op. cit., p. 11.
114. Machal, in The Mythology of All Races, vol. III, p. 279.

> and the hair as clipped; the skilled workman might be thought to have copied the fashion of the Ruegeners in the dressing of the heads. In the right hand it held a horn wrought of divers metals. In the left there was a representation of a bow, the arm being drawn back to the side. A tunic was figured reaching to the shanks which were made of different woods, and so secretly joined to the knees that the place of the join could only be detected by narrow scrutiny. The feet were seen close to the earth, their base being hid underground. Not far off a bridle and saddle and many emblems of godhead were visible. Men's marvel at these things was increased by a sword of notable size, whose scabbard and hilt were not only excellently graven, but also graced outside with silver.[115]

A beautiful white horse was consecrated to Svantovit upon which he warred against those who opposed his worship. The head priest fed and groomed this horse. The success or failure of future events, projects, and warlike expeditions was foretold by means of this horse. A retinue of three hundred horsemen was also set aside for the service of Svantovit, and whatever they won in war or gained in plundering was given to the priest, who in turn used it to adorn the temple. Treasures of great value, including huge quantities of gold were collected this way, and the fame of Svantovit's shrine spread far and wide.[116]

In 1168 the Danish King Valdemar conquered Arkona, seized the treasures of the temple, destroyed the sanctuary and had the idol of Svantovit smashed to pieces and burned.[117]

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115. Saxo Grammaticus, "The First Nine Books of the Danish History," in Anglo-Saxon Classics, R. B. Anderson, ed., pp. 564 ff.
116. Machal, op. cit., p. 280.
117. Ibid., p. 281.

In connection with Svantovit it is necessary to mention Triglav, an image having three heads, which is identified with Svantovit by many scholars. This tricephalous god was honored and worshiped as the chief deity in the towns of Wollin and Stettin by the Baltic.[118] Pagan priests declared that Triglav had three heads which pictured his rule over three realms: heaven, earth, and the underworld; and he covered his face, because he did not want to see the sins of men.[119] A black horse, also used in divination as Svantovit's horse, was consecrated to Triglav.[120]

Perun was the god held in highest esteem and honor by the pagan Russians. They swore in his name not to violate their pacts and treaties with other nations. Prince Vladimir in 980 set a wooden idol of Perun having a silver head and a golden beard, on a hill before his palace at Kiev. Prince Dobrynya erected a similar image in Novgorod on the river Volkhov. No definite information has come down to us about the worship of Perun, but in many old Russian manuscripts he is mentioned in connection with other Slavic deities as Chors, Volos, Vila, Rod, and Rozanica.[121] The statue of Perun at Kiev was demolished when Prince Vladimir after receiving Christian baptism in 988, issued an order that all idols be broken, cut to pieces, or thrown into the

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118. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 179.
119. Machal, op. cit., p. 284.
120. Kulhanek, loc. cit.
121. Machal, op. cit., p. 293.

fire.[122]

The word Perun is derived from the root "per" meaning to strike, while the ending "un" denotes the agent of action. The name is then appropriately translated "The Thunderer," for he was considered the maker of thunder and lightning, like the Greek "Zeus." In fact an old Bulgarian version of the Alexander-romance actually translates the Greek "Zeus" by "Perun."[123] Though history bears out that Perun was worshiped among the Russians, there are data revealing that he was also well known among the other Slavs. To this very day the word Perun is used in the form of "Parom" among the Slovaks in imprecatory exclamations: "nech ho parom vezme," "do paroma!"[124]

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122. Ibid., pp. 293-294.
123. Ibid.
124. Michal Mudry Sebik, Strucne Dejiny Slovakov, p. 6.

IV. High Slavic Gods

The exact number of gods in the Slavic pantheon has not been ascertained and we are left in a cloud. It is stated that the list of gods contained in the pantheon of the Polabians and Russians is so lengthy that, it would consume too much of our time in learning all of them.[125] The Chronicle of Nestor lists seven chief deities among the ancient Slavic tribes: 1) Perun; 2) Volos; 3) Dasbog; 4) Stribog; 5) Semargla; 6) Khors; 7) Mokos.[126] In the pantheon of the Elbe Slavs the gods listed are - Svantovit, Dazbog, Svarozic, Cernobog, Pripegala, and Siva.

Dazbog, or "boh-darca" (the giving god) was worshiped by the Russians as well as among the Polabian Slavs. A statue of this divinity stood on a hill in the courtyard of the castle at Kiev among the idols of Perun, Chors, Stribog, and other pagan deities. Dazbog is termed "Czar Sun" and "Son of Svarog" in old chronicles. That he was worshiped as a solar deity, is inferred from the fact that the name of the Greek god Helios is frequently translated by Dazbog in early Russian texts.[127] The sun was personified in him, for

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125. M. A. Czaplicka, "Slavs," in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, James Hastings, ed., vol. VI, p. 592.
126. E. Lingebach, "Slavs" under "Austria-Hungary," in History of the Nations, H. C. Lodge, ed., vol. XVII, pp. 26-27, quoted in Dolak, op. cit., p. 17.
127. Machal, op. cit., p. 297.

he daily made a journey in the skies and fought against darkness and coldness. He caused the harvest to spring forth and gave health and beauty. His primary task was fighting against the dreadful demon coldness and death and against the cold sun, most generally called "drak" (dragon).[128]

Svarozic was worshiped by the Russians as the god of fire; and his name, being a patronymic, means "Son of Svarog," the same name ascribed to Dazbog.[129] This seems to indicate that there was a very close connection between these two gods, if not identicalness. The meaning of the name Svarog applies also to Svarozic, which is derived from the same stem, while the addition of the suffix "ic" indicates a relationship to the name of his father Svarog.[130]

Cernobog, from which the word "cert" meaning devil is said to be derived, also known as "Zloboh" or "Ljutbog" was the god of evil.[131] Helmold's "Chronicle of the Slavs" gives evidence of a dualism in Slavic religion. At banquets the Slavs were accustomed to offer prayer to a divinity of good and evil. They were convinced that happiness comes from the good god, while ill-fortune comes from the evil god Cernobog.[132] The opposite god was called Bielboh, whose

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128. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 178.
129. Machal, op. cit., p. 298.
130. Ibid.
131. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 176.
132. Machal, op. cit., p. 288.

existence in the Slavic pantheon is attested to by cities in Bohemia, Halic, and Pomerania.[133] Both gods had their train of attendants. Bielboh was lord of heaven and earth, the creator and preserver of the world, boh bohov, and was referred to by all the Slavs originally as Svaroh.[134]

Among the idols which Prince Vladimir erected in Kiev in the 10th century mention is made of the image of Chors (variant spellings: Chers, Churs, Chros). We are left in a state of uncertainty as to the functions of this deity or worship connected with him. It is assumed that he was supposed to have been a god of the sun, since old Slavic texts seem to identify him with the Greek Apollo. The word Chors is seemingly of foreign origin, for there is no explanation in Slavic. "The most plausible supposition," writes Machal, "is that it comes from the Greek 'chrysos' (gold), so that originally it may have been simply the name of a golden or gilt idol erected in Kiev and probably representing Dazbog. If this be so, Chors and Dazbog were, in all likelihood, merely different names applied to one and the same deity."[135] Jagic is of the opinion that the name Dazbog was received by the Russians from Yugoslavia instead of from the foreign name of Chors.[136]

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133. Kulhanek, loc. cit.
134. Ibid.
135. Machal, op. cit., p. 299.
136. J. Otto, op. cit., p. 104, quoted in Dolak, op. cit., p. 22.

Veles or Volos was revered as the god and protector of flocks by the Russians, and placed on the same pedestal as Perun, since they also swore by him when making a treaty. In 988 when Vladimir became a Christian, he ordered the idols of Veles to be destroyed. The memory of this god is still alive among the people of southern Russia where at harvest-time there prevails the custom of tying the last handfuls of ears of grain into a bundle which is called "plaiting the beard of Veles" or "leaving a handful of ears for Veles' beard." Among the Bohemians, whose ancestors were well-acquainted with Veles, the word has come to signify "the devil."[137]

Russian singers regarded Veles as their forefather. They made sacrifices to him of the fruits of the field, of sheaves of grain, and bread. When Christianity was introduced, the worship and honor given to Veles was transferred to St. Vasil (Blazej).[138]

Probably the only example of a man apotheosized in Slavic mythology is that of Trojan. Traditions concerning Trojan possibly came to the Slavs of Russia through their associations with southern Slavs, especially the Bulgarians, who came into contact with the Roumanians and probably even the Romans. Bulgarian geographical names and also to a degree Serbian and Croatian make mention of Trajan. Two theories have been proposed in explanation of Trajan's

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137. Machal, op. cit., p. 300.
138. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 179.

becoming one of the gods in the ancient southern and eastern Slavic pantheon. The first theory ascribes the greatest ruins in the lands of the southern and eastern Slavs to Trajan; or at least his name is connected with them. The second theory, which is also probable, suggests that the deification of Trajan by the ancient Slavs was a result of finding the idea of divinity already attached to him.[139]

In addition to the deities mentioned in this chapter, the names of other divinities of the Elbe Slavs have been handed down to us. Very little information, in fact no details with the exception of the names of these gods, is given us by authorities on Slavic mythology. Even the derivation of the names is veiled with vagueness. Pripegala is mentioned in a pastoral letter of Archbishop of Magdeburg in 1108, where he is compared to Priapus and Baal-peor.[140] Helmold mentions the idol Podaga which has been identified with Triglav. Goddesses as well as gods were also worshiped by the Elbe Slavs. Of the female divinities mention is made of Siva, also written as Ziva, which means the living.[141] Ziva was the preserver and the nourisher of earthly creatures, and has been identified with Lada, who was revered as the goddess of spring, youth, beauty, and fertility.[142] The

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139. Leger, op. cit., pp. 126-133, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 28.
140. Machal, op. cit., p. 290.
141. Ibid.
142. Kulhanek, loc. cit.

Slavs also made sacrifices to Mokosa, who was considered the guardian goddess of women, of their work, of fruits and also the giver of rain.[143] Jagic conjectures that the name is derived from the Greek "malakia" and that Mokosa is therefore the goddess of impurity.[144] We know not what to make of the name of the Slavic deity Semargla, since it does not even seem to be of Slavic origin. Semargla is described as having a breath of ice, clothes of hoar-frost, a mantle of snow and a crown of hailstones.[145] Stribog was represented by a statue on the hill in Kiev at the side of Perun and was in all probability the god of cold and frost. "The winds are called the grandsons of Stribog."[146] He was also personified in a mad, raging hurricane and storm.[147]

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143. Ibid.
144. Leger, op. cit., p. 123, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 23.
145. Morfill, op. cit., p. 267.
146. Machal, op. cit., p. 301.
147. Kulhanek, loc. cit.

V. Minor Deities and Lesser Spirits

The ancient Slavs believed that the whole universe was filled with a host of inferior spirits or genii. These guardian deities according to the pagan Slavs live in the sun, moon, stars, forest, woods, meadows, mountains, marshes, lakes and rivers.

One of the primary genii are the "Navky" (water-nymphs). They are souls of children that have died (the name Navky is derived from "nav" meaning dead) unbaptized, or drowned by their mothers, or born of mothers who met a violent death. The Navky try to entice young people; whoever is lured by them will be tickled to death and drawn into deep water. They are angry at those who permitted them to die unbaptized, and whosoever should perchance hear their lamenting cry: "Mother has borne me and left me unbaptized," should pronounce the Trinitarian baptismal formula over them to set them free. If they are not freed in seven years, they are transferred into water-nymphs.[148]

Very much alike the Navky are the Rusalky also meaning water-nymphs. The most plausible theory traces the name to be derived from "rosalia," the feast of the roses.[149] Other authorities are of the opinion that the name comes from a

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148. Machal, op. cit., p. 253.
149. Leger, op. cit., p. 177, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 44.

Slavic stem, "rus" which is equivalent to "ros" the seas, or to "rusy" meaning light-colored, referring to the color of their hair; or to "ruslo" river bed, since they inhabited rivers.[150] The Rusalky live in woods, meadows, fields, and waters. They are very beautiful and attractive, very fond of dancing, music, making merry and singing. Their fine voices lure swimmers into deep places where they drown.[151] A genuine connection is evident between the rusalky and navky, for they also were considered to be souls of the dead, either of engaged young girls who died before marriage, or unbaptized children, or of drowned women.[152]

Vily (fairies) are very much the same in their appearance and nature as the Rusalky. They are said to be the "most beautiful pearls of our mythology" and that "they are similar to the angels of the Christians as far as their appearance and purpose are concerned."[153]

The signification of the word Vila (in Bulgarian "Samovila" or "Samodiva") has not been satisfactorily explained. It seems to be derived from the root "vel" meaning perish and cognate with the Lithuanian "veles" meaning "spirits of the deceased."[154]

Popular tradition has it that the vily are souls of the

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150. Ibid., in Dolak, op. cit., p. 45.
151. Machal, op. cit., p. 255.
152. Morfill, op. cit., p. 270.
153. Osusky, op. cit., p. 42, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 46.
154. Machal, op. cit., p. 256.

departed, as the navky and rusalky. Among the Slovaks there is a wide-spread tale that the fairies are souls of brides who died after their betrothal, and can find no rest, thus they are doomed to roam about at night. The Vily are believed to originally have lived in close relationship and friendship with human beings. They helped men, when they lived in peace and good-will, to gather their harvests, mow their grass, feed their cattle, build their homes; taught them how to plow, sow, and other useful arts, until men departed from their old virtues and became vile which caused wars to arise. The belief also existed that, every young lad and honest man has a fairy as his sister who aids him in all cases of necessity. In some folk tales Vily are married to men, and make exemplary wives and wonderful housekeepers as long as their husbands do not remind them of their descent, otherwise they disappear for good.[155]

The vily are pictured as beautiful, perpetually young women, with pale cheeks, long golden hair (which is the source of their life and strength) and attired in white. They live in the clouds, waters, mountains, and in the stars. They are very fond of singing and dancing; many places where fairies have danced are recognized by a thick, green circle of grass known as a fairy-ring. They possess remarkable strength and bravery, which is evident when they fight with each other, for they cause the ground to shake and the

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155. Ibid., pp. 257-258.

forest to reverberate with noise. They also possess the power of foretelling the future and of healing diseases.[156]

A spirit dwelling in the water is called Vodnik, and is pictured as a bald-headed old man with a fat belly and puffed-up cheeks, who has the power of transforming himself into many different forms. He is master of the waters and possesses enormous strength as long as he remains in the water.[157] In the springtime when the snow melted sending water rushing down mountain and hill sides in a torrential stream, Vodnik was aroused from his winter sleep and became active.[158] Vodnik is married and pictured as the father of a huge family, having one hundred and eleven beautiful daughters who delight in tormenting the drowned.[159]

Vodne Panny also called Biele Panny (White Women) are tall, sad, and pale water-nymphs attired in transparent green robes. Their abodes are underwater crystal palaces. They enjoy rocking on trees and alluring young lads by their wonderful singing.[160]

Poludnica (Mid-day Spirit) usually appeared in the fields at the time of harvest at noon having the appearance of an old woman. She was covered with a white garment and

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156. Ibid., pp. 258-259.
157. Ibid., p. 270.
158. Jozef Rouzicka, Slovanske bajeslovi, p. 123, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 51.
159. Machal, op. cit., p. 271.
160. Ibid., pp. 271-272.

scared people.[161]

Lesnik is a silvan spirit and had the ability of appearing in either human or animal semblance. His stature is contingent upon the height of the trees in the forest, and he is able to change his height in direct proportion to the size of the trees in the forest realm, in which he rules.[162] His arms were thought to be of copper and his body of an iron color. Lesnik was at times pictured with claws for hands.[163] His principle task was to guard the forest as well as the birds and animals in his territory.[164]

A great multitude of other spirits were believed to have peopled the universe by the pagan Slavs. Dive Zeny (Wild Women) lived in forests and at harvest-time would come down into the fields to reap the corn. It would be bound into sheaves by the rarely-mentioned Wild Men who possessed herculean strength. Jezenky were queer creatures having the faces of women, the bodies of sows, and the legs of horses. The Slovaks also have their Zruty or Ozruti who are wild, massive beings dwelling in the wilderness of the Tatra Mountains.[165] Jagababa was a terrible woman with iron teeth. Morena or Morana was the ruthless goddess of

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161. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 180.
162. Machal, op. cit., p. 261.
163. Afanasaev-Magnus, Russian Folk-Tales, p. 347, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 50.
164. Morfill, op. cit., p. 272.
165. Machal, op. cit., pp. 263-266.

death and winter whom everyone feared. There has been preserved from pagan times even until today a ceremony which takes place at the approach of spring in which Morana, a symbol of winter, is drowned. The young ladies in the villages cast a straw bundle dressed in woman's attire and adorned with ribbons into the waters and at the same time sing: "Vyniesli sme Murenu, priniesli sme Maj" (We have carried out Morana, we have brought in May) or "Smrt nesieme zo vsi, nove leto do vsi" (We are taking death out of the village; we are bringing a new year into the village).[166]

The following list is a supplement of demon-spirits worshipped by the pagan Slavs:

Veternica, the spirit of the wind or air;

Zmok, a flying dragon;

Lada, the goddess of love;

Koleda, the goddess of festivals;

Tras, the demon of terror;

Vesna, the goddess of spring and fruitfulness;

Kupala, the goddess of the fruits of the earth;

Dzydzilelya, the giver of children, a sort of Venus;

Drzewana, often identified with Diana;

Doda or Dodolya, the goddess of waters and rain;

Jutrebog, the god of morning;

Zirnitra, the black dragon;

Pochwist, the god of wind;

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166. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 179.

Cica, worshiped by barren women;

Bludicky, evil spirits;

Topilec or Topnik, an evil spirit who drowns people and beasts;

Cudi, strange water animals, who when angered, do evil;

Skriti, the hidden ones who are the personification of the evil deeds of darkness;

Gorzoni and Ohlas, mountain spirits;

Powietrze, the demon of pestilence;

Dzuma or Chuma, demon of epidemic;

Kikimora, a sort of mora;

Matoha and Bobo, female and male demons who scare children;

Porenut, protector of life in the womb;

Zibog, the god of life;

Zlota Baba, protected the birth and the first years of a child's life;

Usla or Oslad, the demon of sweetness;

Hodu or Godu, the god of banqueting;

Kielo, god of the way;

Bentis, god of travellers;

Lutice, the Furies;

Tur, god of the sun;

Vii, demons whose stare caused a person to turn to ashes;

Ilia, god of thunder, author of rain, dew and hail;

Rinvit, identified with Rugievit at times;

Puruvit, identified with Proven at times;

Turupid, may have been a martial deity;

Kovlad, god of treasures under the earth;

Tiernoglavius, god with black head and silver beard, the god of victory and companion on warlike expeditions;

Trpaslik, Pidimuzik, Pikulik, god of the underworld among the eastern Slavs;

Rarasek, god of the underworld among the western Slavs.[167]

The ancient Slavic belief in the existence of demons may be attributed to their dualistic belief of good and evil existing as two separate entities from the very beginning. A person became a demon either by a curse imposed upon him, or because of lack of baptism. There were good demons and bad demons who acted according to their nature; the good would be helpful, while the bad would be harmful. They had the ability of taking on human guise. An insane person was considered to be possessed of a demon.[168]

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167. Mansikka, "Demons and Spirits" (Slavonic), in Hastings, op. cit., pp. 622-628; McClintock and Strong, Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature, p. 803; Lingebach, op. cit., p. 27; Karl H. Meyer, "Slavic Religion", Religions of the World, Carl Clemen, ed., translated by A. K. Dallas, p. 252; Leger, op. cit., pp. 156-158; Radosavljevitch, op. cit., p. 19; Hanus, Die Wissenschaft des slavischen Mythus, passim; Morfill, op. cit., pp. 272-273; Machal, Bajeslovi slovanske, p. 64; Rouzicka, op. cit., p. 162; Machal, Slavic Mythology, pp. 263-265; quoted in Dolak, op. cit., p. 57.

168. Mansikka, op. cit., pp. 622-623.

VI. Household gods and the Destinies

The Slavic belief in and worship of household gods is confirmed by old reports and evolved in a rather natural manner through the reverence given to the dead by the ancient Slavs.[169] Helmold makes reference to a wide-spread cult of "penates" among the Elbe Slavs and attests to the fact that many groves and household gods abounded among the Slavs. Cosmas tells of how one of the ancestors, Czech, brought the penates on his shoulders to the new country and coming to the river Rzip said: "Rise, good friends, and make an offering to your penates, for it is their help that has brought you to this new country destined for you by Fate ages ago."[170] Names given to the household gods by the Slavs, "ded", "dedek", "deduska", literally meaning old man or grandfather, is a clear indication that the penates had their origin in venerating ancestors.[171]

Each house has its own Deduska Domovoy (Grandfather House-lord) who defends the home and protects all the inhabitants of it against misfortune. He supervises the hired help and does all kinds of work for the master at night. Fortunate is the house-father who knows how to please him, for he will

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169. Meyer, op. cit., p. 247, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 39.
170. Machal, op. cit., p. 246.
171. Ibid.

have success in all that he does. At times the Domovoy reveals his evil and demoniac character, when the people neglect to render him homage and offend him by using offensive language. When a family moves into a new home, they always remember to take their household god with them, and go through a set ritual in installing him in the new abode. The ancient Czechs called their household gods "Dedeks" who were small statues of clay or stone occupying conspicuous places in niches near the doors, on mantels, or above the fire-place. Among the Bohemians "Setek" was the domestic god, resembling a small boy with claws, who generally stayed in the sheep-shed to protect the flocks from disease.

Another name for the family genius was "Skritek" (Hobgoblin) who had the appearance of a small boy. "Skrata" or "Skriatek" among the Slovaks was conceived of as a drenched chicken. "Hospodaricek" or "Domovnicek" was symbolized by a snake.[172]

The Greek historian Procopius claims that the Slavs did not know anything about fate and denied that it had any kind of power over man. But when a sick person threatened by death recovered and was saved from peril, he made a sacrifice to the gods whom he had asked for succor.[173] The Slavs were not determinists or blind fatalists, but they believed in

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172. Ibid., pp. 241-246.
173. Leger, op. cit., pp. 162-163, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 41.

a higher being who had power over life and death, and whose favor might be gained by gifts and sacrifices.[174]

There are many records about these beings. These fates were known by the names of Rod, Rozanice (from "roditi" - to give birth), Sudice (Givers of fate), Narucnici (narok - destiny); among the Bulgarians, Dolya, and among the Serbians, Sreca.[175] The destiny of a person was determined at birth by the Fates, who foretold how long the person would live, what they would be in life, and when they would die. When a child was born, its star became clear in the firmament of heaven. This star directed and guided the child's entire life and disappeared at the same time the party died. A person was not to look for his star, for if he would point it out accidently, it would fall and the person would disappear on the spot. The old Slavs conducted themselves toward the gods of fate as toward the spirits and other idols, venerating them immediately at the birth of a child with sacrifices, mostly of bread, cheese and honey.[176] The writer Otto describes the Fates in action. A deep sleep would be sent upon the woman lying in child-birth. The Fates would then place the new-born child on a table and discuss and determine its destiny. One of the Fates is pictured as busying herself with spinning the thread of life, the second

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174. Machal, op. cit., p. 249.
175. Ibid., pp. 249-252.
176. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 182.

with measuring it, and the third with snipping it at the right place. The dictum of the Fates could be influenced by presenting gifts to them and making sacrifices.[177] It is interesting to note that here we have shades of Greek mythology. There is a striking similarity to the three Fates of the Greeks: Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who spun the thread of human destiny and were armed with shears cutting when they pleased. Thus when they cut the thread, the life of the individual concerned would terminate.

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177. Machal, "Slovenske bajeslovi," in Otto, op. cit., vol. XXIII, p. 436.

VII. Belief in the Soul and Worship of the Dead

The pagan Slavs believed that the soul is immortal and an entirely distinct entity from the body. Thus even during the life of a person, the soul was able to leave the body in the form of a bird or shadow while a person slept or had a fainting spell.[178]

Among the Slavs it is a general belief that the souls could pass into a Mora, a living being, whose soul leaves at night and the body lies like dead. A person may be a Mora from birth, which is discernible by black bushy eyebrows growing together above the person's nose. The mora is able to assume different forms and tries to choke men at night. The mora first sends refreshing slumber, then frightens the victims with nightmares, chokes them and sucks their blood.[179] Charms recommended against a mora were: 1) nailing it to the wall; 2) cutting it through; 3) holding it until 3 A.M. and promising it some gift or inviting it to a meal.[180]

There is also a wide-spread notion among the Slavs that people can assume the form of wolves during their lifetime. Such a person was called "Vlkodlak," which is made up of the words "vlk" meaning wolf and "dlak" which means hair. The

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178. Kulhanek, loc. cit.
179. Machal, op. cit., p. 228.
180. J. Machal, Nakres, p. 178, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 32.

Vlkodlak can transform himself also into different animals and at night attacks domestic cattle, and even attacks human beings and strangles them.[181] Tradition has it that at times the vlkodlaks would chase one another in the sky as clouds and would bite off edges of the sun and moon, thus causing the changes of the moon and also eclipses of the sun and moon.[182]

A Vampire or "upir" was a deceased person who during his lifetime had been a sorcerer, bad character, or murderer whose mortal remains were now occupied by an unclean spirit. Vampires left their graves at night and assumed every kind of shape and form and sucked the blood of the people they chanced upon. They would destroy the victim if they worked on him before cock-crow, for at that time their power came to an end.[183] In the Orthodox Church it is said that there exists the belief that, those who die under the ban of the Church have an incorruptible body which is occupied by an evil spirit.[184]

The Slavs universally believe that the soul can depart from the body in many various forms, especially in the form of a gray dove, eagle, raven, snake, and a white mouse. For this reason, whenever a person dies, a window or door in the house

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181. Machal, op. cit., p. 229.
182. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 182.
183. Machal, op. cit., pp. 231-232.
184. W. M. Petrovitch, Hero Tales and Legends of the Serbians, p. 21, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 31.

is left open (this is done even today among Christianized Slovaks) giving the soul free access and exit as long as the corpse is in the house. The soul wandered about without peace until the corpse was buried, and then later on, after staying in the places it had lived and worked for a period of 40 days,[185] it appeared as a jack-o'-lantern, ignis fatuus,[186] flickering about in church yards or morasses, leading people astray in swamps and ponds, or strangling them and depriving them of sensibility.[187] After death the soul of a righteous person came to "Navi" or "Raj" meaning paradise, where it dwelled with the gods in bliss and joy. On the other hand, the soul of evil people came to a sad and dark territory, in which the demons were lords, and there the soul was punished in many ways.[188]

Death meant separation of the soul from the body to the pagan Slavs; the soul normally departing through the mouth (so it was believed) assumed the form of a bird, most often a gray dove. Death was expressed by the stem "mer" meaning lassitude, benumbing, a destroying.[189] The pagan Slavs, in ancient times, burned their dead; but later on disposed of the dead both by burial and cremation.[190] The corpse was solemnly

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185. Machal, op. cit., p. 230.
186. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 182.
187. Machal, op. cit., p. 231.
188. Kulhanek, loc. cit.
189. Leger, op. cit., p. 201, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 33.
190. O. Schrader, "Death and Disposal of the Dead," in Hastings, op. cit., p. 508.

carried to the funeral-pyre when cremation took place, accompanied with singing and wailing. The corpse was laid upon the pyre and set on fire by the relatives. When the flames consumed the pyre and mortal remains, the ashes, plus charred remains of the bones, were gathered together in an urn and placed in a cairn (a burial mound constructed of small stones) together with weapons, jewels, and all kinds of gifts belonging to the deceased. Tradition among the Elbe Slavs, the Poles, southern Slavs, and the Russians bears out with ample evidence that, if a tribe chieftain died, one of his wives was burned along with him; also his favorite animals, as his horse and pet dog, were killed and cremated. At the grave obsequies of a martial nature took place called "tryzna," which were followed by a noisy, rowdy banquet called "strava."[191] In Bohemia at these burial ceremonies, which took place where roads crossed, certain kinds of games were played according to pagan rites called "scenae." On this occasion masked men told profane jokes "ioci profani." Among the Poles, we are told by the Polish chronicler Vincentius Kadlubek (13th century) that virgins tore out their hair, matrons cut up their faces, and old women rent their clothes, creating a gruesome scene at these burial ceremonies.[192]

In order that the soul of the deceased might not suffer

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191. Machal, op. cit., p. 253.
192. Ibid., p. 234.

hunger or thirst, various kinds of foods and drink were placed into the coffin or the grave. In addition to other gifts, small coins were also placed by the corpse that it might buy a place of its own beyond the tomb.[193] After the internment, at the banquet "strava" a portion of the meal was put aside for the invisible soul which was invited to partake of the feast, consisting of the dead person's favorite dishes.[194] Croatians even today observe such a funeral banquet and call it "karmina;" in Slovak the abbreviated form of this word is "kar." The post-burial feast seems to signify that "the deceased still takes part in the meal."[195]

The ancient Slavs remembered the deceased members of the family and with pious honor and esteem held funeral ceremonies commemorating the passing away of their beloved one. During the first year after the death of one of the family circle, ceremonies were held on the third, seventh, twentieth, and fortieth day after the funeral. Undoubtedly the soul, it was thought, still remaining in its old habitation for forty days after death, derived great joy in seeing how it was remembered by the family. A final ceremony, which is said to be the most touching of all, was held a year later in memory of the departed member of the family.[196]

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193. Ibid., p. 230.
194. O. Schrader, op. cit., p. 509.
195. Ibid.
196. Machal, op. cit., p. 235.

Ideas concerning the state of the dead among the pagan Slavs are scanty and based on indirect testimony and on the evidence presented in surviving folk-lore. Some medieval chroniclers, as Thietmar, deny that the Slavs believed in a life beyond the grave, for he claims that the Slavs "believe that everything ends with death."[197] Yet from the burial rites and customs alluded to in the preceding paragraphs, it is evident that definite beliefs on the life after death existed.

We find indications of a life after death in the three words: Nav, Raj, and Peklo. Raj denotes heaven, while Peklo denotes hell; but originally Raj denoted a pagan paradise. One chronicler takes Nav to signify the abode of the dead, for he writes "Krok went into the Nav" while the god of the dead "Pluto" is called "Nya" by the Polish chronicler Dlugosz, who says that the deceased asked him to carry them "in meliores inferni sedes."[198] Peklo, now meaning hell, originally seems to have referred to a subterranean place of warmth. Raj is still considered as the eastern home of the sun beyond the ocean, maybe an island, where the souls of little children abide, playing among the trees and plucking golden fruits. There is no trace of winter or cold winds in this region.

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197. Thietmar, quoted in Machal, Nakres, p. 18, quoted in Dolak, op. cit., p. 36.
198. J. A. McCulloch, "Abode of the Blest," in Hastings, op. cit., p. 706.

The Isle of Buyan, synonymous with Raj, is also found in Slavic folk-belief as the home of the sun where mythological personifications of nature's powers and mythological animals dwelled.[199]

"Whatever beliefs are held," to quote McCulloch, "the state of the dead was apparently of a sensuous character. Married people continued to dwell together, and to a dead bachelor a maiden was alloted to be his wife in the other world."[200]

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199. Ibid.
200. Ibid., p. 707.

VIII. Miscellany

As regards the origin of the world, Slovak mythology, upon which Christianity had some influence, informs us that, from the beginning there was nothing in existence outside of God, the sun and the sea. God was bathing in the sea, and when he came out of the water, a grain of sand from the bottom of the sea stuck behind his toe nail. This grain became the earth, and the sea bottom its government. According to Russian mythology, when God wanted to create the universe, he sent the devil to bring him a handful of earth from the bottom of the sea. The devil carried out God's order; but he also wanted to keep some for himself; so he hid a bit of earth in his mouth. God then threw the earth, which the devil brought him, over the water from which sprang the three parts of the world. These parts are not specifically mentioned, but undoubtedly refer to the underworld, the world proper, and the upper world. The bit of earth in the devil's mouth also grew, thus he spit it out over the earth causing the formation of swamps, deserts, and unfruitful, unproductive lands.[201]

Man, according to Slovak mythology, was created from a bead of sweat, which came out on God's forehead and fell on the earth. Therefore from the very beginning man is destined to a life of sweat and labor. In this respect Russian mythology

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201. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 177.

relates that, God, when he created the animals by his word, (he) also formed the human body out of sand, which was very lovely and free from all ills. But when God went to heaven after a soul for his creature, the devil came upon the body and spit all over it. This is the reason for all kinds of sins, deprivations and wants, ills and death of man. When God returned, even though he knew what had transpired, he nevertheless placed a heavenly soul into the body.[202]

The firmament of heaven was considered by the Slavs to be a circular flat stone which God broke in half. He kept the right half for himself and gave the left half to the devil. But just before giving this left half to the devil, God struck the stone against himself a few times causing sparks to fly. Out of these sparks he created a retinue of good spirits, who would praise him. The devil seeing this, became jealous and also wanted such a retinue of spirits; but he did not know how to bring this about. Thus God advised him to wash his face and hands, and spit the water behind himself. The devil did this, and as many drops of water as there were, so many evil spirits or demons came into being. Having power, the devil began to oppose God; but he is struck down by thunder into a precipice.[203]

Nature and its phenomena played a very important part in the beliefs and practices of the pagan Slavs.[204] Slavic

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202. Ibid.
203. Ibid., pp. 177-178.
204. Morfill, op. cit., p. 275.

worship of the sun and other heavenly bodies is mentioned by early writers. In fact many Slavs, as Arabian nomads assert, renounced the Christian faith in preference to sun-worship. An old Bohemian homilist in a "Letter of Bruno to King Henry" records that the pagan Czechs worshiped water, fire, mountains and trees in addition to the sun, moon and stars.[205]

There was a wide-spread belief that the moon was the abode of the souls of the dead; and later was regarded as the habitation of sinful souls which were placed there for punishment. The ancient Slavs believed that a close association existed between stars and men; and that there are as many stars in the heavens as there are men on earth. As was previously mentioned in the chapter concerning the destinies, at the birth of a child, its star appeared in the sky which guided its destiny. At death the star would fall to the earth, as the soul of the deceased would fly upward to the clouds.[206]

In all probability fire was also worshiped by the ancient Slavs.[207] The sun, moon, and fire were pictured as a caldron from which the Slavic race had come to existence.[208] Rivers were also an object of worship as is attested to by images representing the Don, Dneiper, and Bug.[209]

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205. A. Bielowski, "Monumenta Poloniae historica," i. 226, in Machal, op. cit., p. 273.
206. Ibid.
207. Meyer, op. cit., p. 250.
208. Radosavljevitch, op. cit., p. 17, in Dolak, op. cit., p. 54.
209. Ibid., p. 15.

The Slavs believed that fire, water and earth were consecrated elements from which nothing impure could be obtained. Therefore these elements were used in judging the guilt or innocence of an accused person.[210]

Whether the Slavs had temples of worship or not is a moot question. Evidence is set forth by authorities for both the existence and non-existence of temples. The history of Slavic architecture sheds no light on such structures, nor are there any ruins which would bear out the existence of such ancient places of worship.[211] There are records of the Elbe Slavs, who worshiped their idols in temples decorated in great splendor. Groves consecrated to the gods, high elevated places and mountains dear to the gods, were also used as places of worship.[212] Saxo Grammaticus gives a graphic description of a pagan Slavic temple dedicated to Svantovit in Arkona on the island of Ruegen:

> On a level in the midst of the city was to be seen a wooden temple of most graceful workmanship, held in honor not only for the splendor of its ornament, but for the divinity of an image set up within it. The outside of the building was bright with careful graving, whereon sundry shapes were rudely and uncouthly pictured. There was but one gate for entrance. The shrine itself was shut in a double row of enclosure, the outer whereof was made of walls and covered with a red summit; while the inner one rested on four pillars, and instead of having walls was gorgeous with hangings, not communicating with the outer save for the roof

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210. Kulhanek, op. cit., pp. 181-182.
211. Leger, in Hastings, op. cit., p. 774.
212. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 181.

> and a few beams.....Much purple hung round the temple; it was gorgeous, but so rotten with decay that it could not bear the touch. There were also the horns of woodland beasts, marvelous in themselves and for their workmanship.[213]

Sacrifices called "zertvy" consisting of animals and of the fruits of the field were offered to the gods and genii. Some Slavs sacrificed their sons and daughters chosen by lot to idols;[214] also captives taken in war were slaughtered in honor of the gods. Sacrifices were performed by the father for his family and by the chieftain for his tribe. Among the Elbe Slavs, offering sacrifices was one of the duties of their priests, who were honored and esteemed; especially was the head priest held in high regard being placed on the same elevated pedestal as the king himself.[215] The priests also looked after the shrines of the gods, delivered oracles, foretold future events, and practiced augury. Saxo Grammaticus gives us the details of an act of divination by the priest in the temple of Svantovit:

> On the morrow, the people being at watch before the doors, he took the cup from the image, and looked at it narrowly; if any of the liquor put in had gone away he thought that this pointed to a scanty harvest for the next year. When he had noted this he bade them keep, against the future, the corn which they had. If he saw no lessing in its usual fulness, he foretold fertile crops. So, according to this omen, he told them to use the harvest of the present year now thriftly, now generously. Then he poured out the old wine as a libation at

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213. Saxo Grammaticus, Danish History, II, pp. 564 ff.
214. Kulhanek, loc. cit.
215. Machal, op. cit., p. 305.

> the feet of the image, and filled the empty cup with the fresh; and feigning the part of a cup-bearer he adored the statue and in a regular form of address prayed for good increase of wealth and conquests for himself, his country and its people. This done, he put the cup to his lips, and drank it up over-fast at an unbroken draught; refilling it then with wine, he put it back in the hand of the statue.[216]

The pagan Slavs believed that many people with the help of fairies or other spirits were able to foretell events of the future. These were "vestci" prophets, or "zreci" seers. They augured from fire, smoke, water, from the flight of birds, the buzzing of bees, the trotting of horses, and from the entrails of animals. The ill-boding birds were chiefly the owl and the gray dove, which was symbol of the soul of a dead person, and therefore considered the bird of death. The prophets also listened to the rustling of trees, especially the oak, and interpreted dreams. In auguring from animals, much depended upon color. White meant good, whereas black meant ill-fortune. Good fortune was generally placed on the right, ill-fortune on the left. In guarding against misfortune and a dreadful future, the Slavs wore various amulets.[217]

The seasonal changes of the year were celebrated by the old Slavs in loud, showy, and elaborate festivals. At Christmas time they celebrated the birth of the sun and the new year. They burned a wreathed tree stump with a holy fire, which they squirted with consecrated water and then threw

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216. Grammaticus, loc. cit.
217. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 181.

grain over it, that they might have a bountiful harvest. A piece of cake, some honey wine, yeast and other gifts were given to all the cattle and poultry, that they should be productive and that the farm increase. At Easter time, the sun was honored, for then it reached its summit. Mighty fires were made on elevated places. At the festivities there were songs and dances, also sacrifices to the gods.[218]

Slavic pagan mythology was reflected in different religious maxims, proverbs and hymns, which were handed from generation to generation. These were composed by seers, who were skilled in the art of extracting juices from herbs and making medicines. The seers were also acquainted with the movement of the stars and the sun. They established a calendar and also proclaimed the will of the gods and formulated laws. With their store of knowledge and skills they ruled over the people for many centuries until the dawn of Christianity, when almost all Slavic mythology receded into the background and was just about forgotten. Only a few myths remained about fairies, water gods, noon-day gods, and accounts of a few annual festivals and prevalent customs.[219]

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218. Ibid.
219. Ibid., p. 183.

Conclusion

In Slovak mythology, namely from the aspect of the religious beliefs and practices of the ancient Slavs, there is a clear indication of the natural knowledge of God. The pagan Slavs believed in the existence of a supreme being, whom they called "boh bohov" and considered him as the creator and regulator of the entire universe. This very fact points to the assumption that they must have had some innate idea about God in their hearts, otherwise they could never have conceived of a one single god and lord over all things.

The ancient Slavs worshiped their penates, house-hold gods in whom they placed their trust and reliance. The sun, moon, stars, rivers, nature and all its phenomena were also worshiped. Sacrifices were made to appease the gods and to gain their favor. In all matters and concerns of life, the pagan Slavs sought the approval, sanction, succor of their gods. It holds true, that no matter how debased their religion and worship was, it bears witness to a sense of dependence upon God.

Fire, water, and earth were consecrated elements used in ordeals to determine the guilt or innocence of an accused person. This indicates that, through the religious instinct common to all men, they possessed a sense of accountability. Men pass judgments upon others on the assumption that they

are accountable morally. In this way men bear witness to their own accountability and to the existence of Him to whom they must render account.

The natural knowledge of God is inherent in mankind. In all literatures of all nations the careful, deliberate reader can find traces of the natural knowledge of God manifest in some manner. The natural knowledge of God is written in man's heart and exercises great influence in the formation of religious beliefs, even though they find expression, as in Slovak mythology, through perverted avenues of idolatry and grotesque forms or through superstitious ideas.

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